

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 8, and 10-22 have been canceled and new claims 26-38 have been added; therefore, claims 7, 9, and 23-38 are currently pending. Reconsideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested in light of the following remarks. New claims 28-38 have been added. No new matter has been added.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 9 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but the Examiner has indicated that the claim would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. In response, Applicants have rewritten claim 7 to include all of the relevant limitations of claims 8 and 9, thereby placing that claim in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,900,135 to Somekh et al. (hereinafter "Somekh") in view of JP63244748. Claims 8 and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Somekh in view of JP63244748 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,355,516 to Kim et al. (hereinafter "Kim"). Claim 23 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Somekh in view of JP63244748 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,512,227 to Iwabuchi et al. (hereinafter "Iwabuchi"). Claim 24 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Somekh in view of JP63244748 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,841,008 to Branco et al. (hereinafter "Branco").

In response, as indicated above, Applicants have rewritten claim 7 to include all of the relevant limitations of claims 8 and 9, thereby placing claim 7 in condition for allowance. Claims 9 and 23-26 depend from and further limit claim 7 and are therefore also deemed to be in condition for allowance.

New Claims

New claims 27-38 contain limitations similar to those of claims 7, 9, and 23-26 and are therefore also deemed to be in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is apparent that independent claims 7, 9, and 23-38 are now in condition for allowance. An early formal notice of allowance of all pending claims is therefore respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

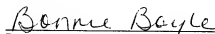

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